Pretty Young Thing

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Pretty Young Thing

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Hannibal is seduced by beauty itself.

Notes

Hannibal thinks Will is a cis male, but when he discovers otherwise he absolutely does not care.

Historical Note: I've set this somewhere around 1920, a little later than Death in Venice is set and a year after the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft opened, where Will will be treated. Medical treatments and surgeries for trans people began as early as 1905, including hysterectomies and hormone therapies. Though phalloplasties were not developed until post World War II as a continuation of surgeries pioneered to assist soldiers who had lost their genitalia during combat.

“Hmm, a pretty young thing, aren’t you.” Hannibal muttered to himself as he watched the androgynous and elfin-like creature make their way across the beach.

He wasn’t sure at first he was looking at a male or female until they dropped their robe and the soft bulge in their one piece bathing suit gave them away. Gender seemed irrelevant to such beauty, Hannibal could imagine such a creature was the object of much unwanted attention and affection either way.

Hannibal hummed again, enjoying the sight of the lithe young man, little more than a teen he suspected, dancing through the waves but causing barely a ripple.

He looked down at the book in his hands as he laid out on the sun lounger on this stretch of beach that sat directly in front of his hotel. He knew he wouldn’t be reading any further today, peering over the book instead to watch the pretty youth swim back and forth. He frolicked with other teenagers, but Hannibal observed several occasions where older boys and men attempted to catch his attention and instead the boy’s mother called him back to the beach.

Hannibal eyed the family, this boy and his mother and a dourly dressed woman that Hannibal had to suppose to be the boy's governess or the mother's lady's maid. The mother's clothing made clear their wealth, which had to be the case to enjoy such luxury as this vacation spot had to offer. The boy's smiles made clear their happiness. It was a joy to behold and, captivated now by that inescapable beauty, Hannibal found himself wishing them every happiness.

Hannibal turned back to his book, his eyes focusing on nothing until he noticed movement and the family packing up. With laughter and smiles they made their way towards him, having to walk past where he sat to return to the promenade.

As they passed, the boy was wrapping his robe back around his sea-soaked body, smiling and bright.

And then, his eyes landed on Hannibal.

Hannibal's expression was flat, as he always maintained a dignified calmness, but there was no hiding the intent in his eyes. The hunger that the boy must see several times daily.

Then, surprisingly, as the boy slowed a little under the guise of tying his belt, he smiled.

It was a wonderful smile, one that would have been worthy to bring down Troy.

Hannibal had no control over his response. His own smile formed with no intent from himself. Never before had anyone drawn a response from him that he had not first calculated and controlled. But now as the boy's smile turned to something more of a teasing smirk, Hannibal let out a soft breath.

The boy blinked, his long eyelashes moving slowly and enticingly as he continued close enough that Hannibal could have reached out and touched him if he so wished.

As he drew level, the women now a few paces ahead, the boy stopped and crouched down to adjust the shoes he had slipped his sandy feet into.

Any other man might have found his heart pounding. But despite the previously uncontrolled smile, Hannibal took a grip of his desires and gave no response to the boy, who appeared to be something of a minx. Not as innocent as his countenance and youth claimed.

Hannibal watched him nonetheless and, after adjusting his shoes, the boy looked up at him and his smirk melted into a genuine smile. There was something pleased about his expression, as though he had expected Hannibal to be openly lusting for him and admired that he was not.

"Good day, Sir." The boy greeted, his voice soft and musical. He tipped his head, and in response Hannibal tipped his hat, and then the boy rose and was gone.

Hannibal drew in a deep breath, allowing his heart to flutter a little now and enjoying the ache the boy had caused him.

It was later that evening that Hannibal discovered that the family was staying in the same hotel as himself.

He went down for a late dinner, having spent a few more hours on the beach enjoying the fresh air and thoughts of the young man. Once he'd freshened up and dressed for dinner, he decided to take his meal in the bar, and that was when he saw them exiting the grand dining room.

The boy looked almost as enchanting as he had on the beach. Dressed in a smart suit that still held some of the vestiges of childhood - a loose, silken bow at the neck of his shirt rather than a tie. Still as beautiful. Still as overwhelming when his eyes met Hannibal's and a slight, enigmatic smile drifted over the boy's countenance.

Yes, Hannibal was beguiled, and just the brief glimpse was enough to let him know that his heart and body would not rest until he made the pretty young thing's acquaintance.

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The week passed with the boy ever present. In Hannibal's thoughts if not sighted in person. Though he did indeed see the family often around the hotel and the small town. Sometimes, Hannibal fancied, the boy moved for him. He would make eye contact for just a moment and then within a minute he would stretch, arch his back, or bend. Or in some other way tantalisingly present his body.

Most often than not, Hannibal saw them on the beach. The sun would hit the boy's porcelain white flesh and make it glow but never marked it, never burned or darkened his complexion in the least. Hannibal knew this for he had found that the view his suite offered over the beach gave an advantage. He could see clearly the boy as he frolicked, he could feel the burn of jealousy as he saw others watching him. And gratitude relieved him when his mother saw these things too and called him to her side.

Twice he went back down to the beach, and on those days there was a reenactment of that first time.

On the second he apparently dallied too long for then the maid, as Hannibal decided she was, called back to him to hurry him along.

"William."

William.

It was so strange to hear his name. Although the very fact that it belonged to him gave it some element of wonder, it was not what Hannibal had expected. Perhaps something more angelic or ethereal. Something that spoke of his parents realising that they had borne an enchanting, perhaps divine creature and named him accordingly.

As it was, Hannibal sounded the name over and over in his mouth. Tasting it on his lips as he wished to taste the boy's own lips.

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Hannibal took dinner in the bar, as he had grown accustomed to doing, not trusting himself to sit in the dining room where he might be mesmerised by William and starve to death with nothing to feast on but his beauty.

So he was surprised this night, when the young man, wearing smart pants and a light sweater, came into the bar.

Their eyes found each other immediately and Hannibal knew then that he had been sought out. He calmed his breathing and settled himself as the boy approached the small corner table that he occupied.

“Good evening,” William said as he sat in the opposite armchair with no invitation. He crossed one leg over the other and placed his hands in his lap, awaiting a response with an open expression.

“Good evening, William.” Hannibal replied, cool but friendly. “I don’t believe I should call the waiter over, I am sure you are too young to be allowed alcohol.”

That drew a lopsided smile from the boy who replied, his eyes locked on Hannibal’s as though daring him to look away, “I’m seventeen.”

Hannibal hummed at the information, feeling a little flutter of hope. Seventeen was no child, and it gave credence to the thoughts Hannibal had already had, that this boy knew exactly what he was doing. A practiced seducer.

And Hannibal fancied that he knew when he was being seduced. Especially when he gave no resistance to it.

“Alcohol will ruin you, my boy.” Hannibal continued, swirling his own glass and then drinking down the last of his brandy before setting his glass on the low table between them. “It will age you beyond your years. And I will do nothing to destroy your youthful beauty.”

Despite the smirk from the boy, his cheeks pinked and he finally looked away.

It struck Hannibal that this young man was used to being chased and wooed. That he expected to fluster Hannibal and use that to his advantage. However, he seemed all the more delighted that this wouldn’t be the case.

He looked back to Hannibal with gentle eyes and a softness to his expression. “You wouldn’t be the first person to try and get me drunk.” It was a confession as much as a tease and Hannibal shook his head.

“I shan't try at all. I have no desire to see your cheeks any pinker than they are now.” Hannibal gently put and didn’t miss the hitch of William’s breath.

After a minute of silence the boy requested, “Call me Will. Only my governess calls me William.”

Hannibal inclined his head in agreement and then replied, “And so I have you at an advantage.”

The boy’s smile widened, “You’re Hannibal Lecter.” He noted.

Hannibal cocked a brow and tilted his head, a smile spreading, amused and curious.

Will shrugged and then continued, “I told the concierge that I found your book on the beach and wished to know to whom it should be returned. He offered to take it, but I insisted that I return it to you at dinner and it would not be proper for me to intrude upon you without being first introduced or at the least knowing your name. And so he gave it to me.”

“Clever boy,” Hannibal smiled, fond and fierce. Oh how he longed to hold this boy closer with every passing moment of his acquaintance.

Before either of them could say anything further, a waiter appeared and collected Hannibal’s glass.

“Another, Signore?” He asked as he looked at Hannibal and then at the boy.

Hannibal shook his head, “No. It is getting late.” When the waiter nodded and retreated, he turned back to Will, “Perhaps I should ensure you get back to your room safely.”

“Yes.” Will replied, his eyelashes fluttering.

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Hannibal let out a long breath as he skirted his hands up the boy’s clothed waist.

They had retired to his own suite and he hoped that they had time enough to know each other before the boy really should return to his family so that they didn’t worry and come looking.

“Will,” He muttered against the boy's throat as he stooped slightly to press him to the wall and began to lavish him with wet, open mouthed kisses. He wanted to devour him, consume every part of him and hold him within forever.

Will whimpered in response, his crotch pressing forward to find Hannibal’s own and rut against him.

“May I have you?” Hannibal asked, voice hoarse as he rubbed his cheek against the boy’s enchanted by the smoothness of his skin.

“I…” Will started. “I want…” He pushed Hannibal away gently, and Hannibal allowed it. Allowed Will to escape his grasp and walk over to the large bed.

Hannibal was surprised to see the nervous expression on the boy’s face when he sat, though it grew a little more confident as Hannibal stepped toward him.

As soon as he was within reach, Will took hold of Hannibal’s belt and began to undo it, making quick work of the belt and fly and reaching in to pull Hannibal’s hard shaft from his

pants.

“Will,” He rasped the boy’s name and didn’t resist as a hand on his belt pulled him closer until the tip of his penis slid into the boy’s perfect mouth.

He grunted and balled his fists, resisting the urge to thrust, or take hold of the boy’s hair, as he had done many times before with whores. He did not mean to treat this boy the same as he had prostitutes in the past. He wished to worship this boy and make it clear that he was in love with him. In love with beauty itself, alluring and seductive as it was.

The small, clever mouth that lapped and sucked had Hannibal squeezing his eyes shut, his body thrumming and drawing painfully close to a very fast conclusion.

With some effort he pulled back, his cock falling from Will’s mouth, the boy looking up at him with a lust hazed, but confused expression.

“Would you permit me, Will?” Hannibal started and leaned down to kiss his own flavour from the boy’s lips.

His mouth was practiced and nicely shaped. Hannibal was far from the first person this boy had kissed, but that couldn’t matter now. All that mattered was that Will was with him in that moment. In his room, in his bed.

But when he fingered the edges of Will’s sweater and attempted to pull it up, Will broke the kiss and pulled away, pushing himself further to the centre of the bed. The concerned, now anxious expression was back and Hannibal stilled, not wanting to scare the boy away.

“What is it?” He asked softly.

“I… I’ve never.” Will started and then shook his head. “I’ve used my hands and my mouth, I’ve kept my clothes on and humped until, until… But I’ve never. No one has ever touched me. I’ve never let them.”

“Will,” The name came out with reverence.

Could it be? Was there a chance that Hannibal might be allowed to deflower this beautiful creature?

“I want to,” Will said quickly. “But I’m… I’m scared. I don’t want you to hate me. I like bring people pleasure, I like it when they like me and I don’t want you to not like me.”

Hannibal’s expression softened. “My darling boy, why ever would I hate you? Come.” He crooked a finger and when Will came slowly forward he smiled.

Once close enough Hannibal took hold of the sweater and the thin shirt beneath and pulled them slowly up and off, resulting in the boy getting up onto his knees to allow it. His arms remained outstretched above his head as Hannibal pulled the clothing away, and then slowly fell.

He looked to the side, avoiding Hannibal’s gaze as he took the boy in.

He was indeed beautiful. Lithe and soft, just a small amount of that childhood fat remaining to make his chest seem a little plump.

“You are divine beauty.” Hannibal muttered softly and then reached forward again.

Will did not resist, but he did let out a soft whimper as Hannibal unfastened his trousers and then pushed him to his back to enable to pull them off, along with his shoes and socks.

And there the boy lay, just his underwear now, his soft cock within showing no signs of the same arousal as Hannibal. For a moment he considered he should be concerned, but perhaps Will would permit him to resolve the situation? If he was used to being with people only so they might like him and give him some sort of affirmation, it could be anxiety that kept him from getting hard.

Hannibal tucked himself back into his own underwear but removed his shoes, socks and pants, and then his vest, shirt and tie as Will watched. There was no mistaking the hungry gaze, the way the boy bit at his lower lip as he studied Hannibal’s chest hair.

Once as naked as the boy, Hannibal moved onto the bed, lying down on his side next to Will and stroking a hand through his hair.

“So beautiful.” He murmured as he leaned in to kiss him. The kiss was soft and slow, as was the movement of his hand as he drifted it from Will’s hair down his side and then between his thighs. He gently pushed Will’s thighs apart, catching one between his own, and then slowly moved it to his crotch.

Will didn’t deny him as he rested his hand against the front of Will’s underwear and palmed at his sex. Instead he merely let out a sound of longing and need.

“Sweet boy, pretty young thing,” Hannibal muttered against his mouth as he pulled his hand up and then slid it down into Will’s underwear. “Such a beautiful bo-”

Hannibal cut his words off as he felt the loose fabric in his hand and pulled it away. His hand came out of Will’s underwear with a small, stuffed, sausage-shaped cloth object.

When he looked down at Will, his eyes were squeezed shut and he looked about to cry.

“A beautiful girl, perhaps?” Hannibal ventured, setting the faux phallus onto the bed and then resting his hand on the waistband of Will’s underwear.

“Boy,” Will corrected, his words stern as he shook his head and opened his eyes. They were burning with an emotion Hannibal couldn’t name. Not rage, not fear, but some sort of pre-emptive protection from an anticipated rejection.

Hannibal smiled and let out a pleased hum.

“You are darling, my beautiful beautiful boy,” Hannibal replied, nuzzling into Will’s neck and sliding his hand back into his underwear.

With a whimper Will spread his legs and Hannibal found him wet and wanting.

Of course it made sense that such ethereal beauty could only be akin to an angel. To those with men's name and countenance but God had seen fit not to give them male sex.

"Do you still want me?" Will asked, nervous but aroused by the movement between his legs as Hannibal ran his fingers over the small nub that was Will's cock. The boy gasped when Hannibal moved his hand further, pressing a finger against his wet hole.

"I don't think I can ever stop wanting you." Hannibal admitted, pulling back to look at the boy's widening smile. "I think you have ruined me forever."

The laughter that issued forth from the boy was a magical tinkle of sound.

When he pulled Hannibal down into a kiss, he was helpless to resist. After a few sweet moments, Hannibal moved, retrieving his hand and positioning himself between the boy's widening thighs.

They continued to kiss as he pressed his clothed erection against the growing damp patch on Will's underwear. At the press of it, Will gasped a breath and then whimpered.

The kiss broken, they gazed at each other as Hannibal began to move, rocking slowly.

The friction was delightful and Hannibal was sure he'd be content to ejaculate like this, but the increasingly desperate sounds from the boy beneath him made him wonder if the same was true for Will.

"Tell me what you'd like, sweet boy?" Hannibal asked, just above a whisper. A tone that made Will shiver and bite at his lip again.

"I want you to… Will you take my virginity?" Will asked in a small, cautious voice.

"Darling boy," Hannibal breathed out the words and rubbed his nose alongside Will's. "It is a gift I will treasure always."

Will's smile was a little forced and Hannibal realised that he was understandably scared.

"I will try to ensure it is not painful." Hannibal assured him, not knowing what sex education the boy had formally had to prepare him for such a thing. Fooling around and rutting had surely taught him a lot, but penetration was different.

"Tell me darling," Hannibal started softly, wanting to make sure this was right, that this was perfect. He slid his hand between them and stroked the front of Will's underwear. "Would you like me to take you here," he moved his fingers lower, cupping them under the boy. "Or here?" He stroked the split of the boy's ass.

Will's breath hitched and his cheeks reddened in a delightful way.

He blinked, his beautiful eyelashes fluttering once more before he replied. "The first one, um, the front."

Hannibal smiled, encouraging and fond, as he nodded.

He placed a light kiss on the tip of Will's nose and then moved back, sitting up on his knees enough to look about the room. His wash bag was in the bathroom, he realised.

"Stay here for one moment, sweet boy. I'll be back." Hannibal moved backwards off the bed and then took an easy pace to the bathroom, not wanting to betray quite how eager he was.

There his wash bag sat on the shelf, and inside it was the small box of prophylactics that he had thought he might not have a need for on this trip. How delightful it was to be wrong.

As he turned, Hannibal caught sight of himself in the mirror and was a little startled. His skin glowed, he looked youthful. The sheer enchantment of the boy laying in his bed was enough to take years off of his age it would seem. The fact that he was more than twice the boy's age had not especially concerned him, and now even less so.

With a smile, Hannibal returned to the bedroom, only to stop in his tracks as he caught sight of the bed.

There the boy had made himself comfortable. He had pulled back the covers and settled under the blankets and against the plump pillows. However he had not pulled the blankets up far enough to hide the fact that he had removed his underwear and sat with one leg bent, in order to reveal himself.

Hannibal felt his blood thundering around his body and it was true what he had said. This boy would ruin him.

He might as well kill himself after this night if he could never have the boy again because surely he would otherwise die a slow death of wasting and insanity.

When Will looked up with a soft smile and held out his hand, Hannibal fancied that he radiated light as an angel might. It was as though beauty had become a tangible thing that only Will and Will alone had control over.

Hannibal tossed the packet on the bed and pushed down his own underwear, stepping out of them and freeing his desperately aching member, as he reached for Will's hand. Hannibal allowed himself to be pulled to the bed as he had been before. It would seem some of Will's confidence had returned, and that was clear in the passionate way the boy kissed him.

Hannibal took hold of his narrow hips and moved Will, pulling him beneath him as they continued to kiss and sink into the pillows.

When Will pulled back to gasp for breath, Hannibal continued. He kissed down the boy's throat and to his chest. Although as androgynous as any pre-pubescent child would be, he understood the plumpness now was more like that of a flat chested female. And yet he could see Will as nothing but wholly male.

He considered moving further downward and ignoring the budding breasts, but then curiosity tempted him to seek Will's reaction.

Will writhed when Hannibal gently licked over his right nipple. When he did it again Will's legs spread wider for him. But when he closed his mouth around the nub and began to flick his tongue over it Will's breath hitched and he twisted away.

When Hannibal released his nipple, Will's arms came to fold over his chest but his expression looked sheepish.

"It's nice… just too much. I don't like how sensitive-" Will started to explain but Hannibal moved up and hushed him with a soft kiss.

"There is no need for you to explain, sweet boy. I should have asked."

At that Will smiled, soft and thankful.

Hannibal continued his way down, kissing softly down Will's belly, until he reached Will's spread legs.

He looked up at Will and the movement had Will looking back at him. "Would you like me to take you into my mouth? As you did for me earlier?" Hannibal asked.

Will swallowed but then nodded and gave a sheepish smile.

With that encouragement, Hannibal ran his tongue up from Will's entrance to the little nub that served as his cock, and then drew that small member into his mouth. He bobbed his head as much as he could as he sucked and licked, trying to mimic the experience Will had given himself and others in the past.

As Will's whimpers turned to moans and his hips began to twitch, Hannibal pulled back. He gave one last suck and then moved lower down to run his tongue over Will's deliciously wet entrance. He pressed a finger in as well as his tongue, seeking to open and moisten the boy as much as he could. An easy task given how wet the boy already was.

When Hannibal pressed in a second finger, Will arched up off of the bed.

"H-Hannibal," He gasped, and the sound of his name on the sweet boy's mouth made Hannibal's own cock leak.

He wriggled his fingers, and enjoyed the way that made Will moan and shake. Until finally he sat back on his haunches, and drew his fingers out whilst looking down as Will tried to catch his breath.

"Please," Will begged as Hannibal reached for the little box and drew out a condom. If he were taking the boy analy he might not have used one, and as enticing as it was to not use one at all, he didn't want to risk any unfortunate complications from their copulation.

And so Hannibal sheathed himself in the condom and then moved back over Will, taking his mouth in a soft kiss.

When Will's arms went around his neck and pulled him down, Hannibal went willingly, sliding his cock against Will's wetness.

“Please, oh god…” Will begged and wrapped his legs around Hannibal.

Hannibal reached between them and pressed his cock down, sliding it against Will’s cock and then lower until it was at his entrance. Hannibal gazed into those beautiful eyes as he pushed forward.

The feeling of pressure around him was divine.

Will’s eyes were wide but did not betray any pain, only wonder as Hannibal slowly moved inside him.

By the time Hannibal was buried to the hilt, they were clinging desperately to each other. Hannibal began to rock, with very little room for momentum as Will wrapped himself tightly around him.

When their mouths found each other again, the kiss was desperate but slow. A drag of lips and a haphazard probing of tongues.

When Will whimpered Hannibal thrust harder. That drawing more whimpers, and an increased tightness in response. Hannibal stilled.

“Am I hurting you?” Hannibal asked against Will’s mouth. But Will shook his head.

“N-no. Keep going. Want you,” Will replied and then moaned.

It was difficult to believe that he was inside the boy. This beauty. A creature that should be untouchable and impossible to sully. And yet this didn’t feel anything other than pure. Pure desire and passion. Obsession and love. Divine.

As he moved, Will moved. Matching his pace and meeting each thrust.

When the boy began to writhe, seeking friction, Hannibal slipped a hand between them and pressed his thumb to Will’s little nub.

“Oh god!” Will cried out and shuddered, his whole body shaking as Hannibal continued to thrust and to rub, bring the boy to the edge of his climax.

“Come for me, sweet boy. Nothing would please me more than to witness your pleasure.” Hannibal encouraged, breathless and skin shining with sweat.

Will bit his lower lip and nodded, his eyes closed as he rocked against Hannibal. And then his mouth opened, slack as he panted and moaned.

A moment later Hannibal could feel Will clenching around him in waves. He continued his ministrations, fucking into the constricting muslces, as Will cried out and sobbed, shook and squeezed his eyes shut.

“Hannibal,” His name forced its way out of Will’s mouth on a gasp and a sob as his climax peaked.

“Dear, sweet, Will.” Hannibal said with reverence as he continued to move, gentle thrusts into the tightening passage. “My pretty young thing.”

He rocked into Will a few more times and then spilled, emptying himself with a long moan as his skin prickled and his heart swelled.

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It had been an hour since they’d made love, and still the boy lay in his bed. In his arms.

They spoke softly. Will spoke about his studies and hopes for the future. Truly an exceptional and clever boy indeed. With every revelation about the sweet boy, Hannibal fancied that he fell all the more in love.

He knew he should send him away. It was now approaching eleven and surely his family would wonder where he was. And yet he was loath to encourage the boy to leave.

What if this was the extent of their time together?

As much as he had been taken with the boy’s beauty and his own desire for his body, he felt now he wanted to know the boy more. He wanted to know Will’s deepest hopes and dreams and be with him at his side.

A foolish fancy of an old man enraptured by a beautiful youth. How many Greek’s had told such stories?

Hannibal trailed his fingers up and down the boy’s naked body, committing the sight and sensation to memory.

“We’re leaving in a few days.” Will said, breaking a moment of silence that had fallen between them. “We would have stayed longer but I have an appointment in Germany. My mother is taking me to see Doctor Hirschfeld in Berlin. He… treats people like me.”

At those words Hannibal couldn’t help but lean in and take another kiss, a gentle press before he pulled back and smiled down at Will.

“You are perfect, just as you are.”

At that Will scrunched up his face and though he moved only slightly, it was clearly a recoil. Hannibal had said something wrong, though he wasn’t sure what.

“What will the doctor do?” Hannibal asked instead, hoping to understand.

“I’m not sure yet. They have been developing treatments. And I…” Will looked away, nibbling nervously at his lip. “I hope I will have a hysterectomy. I’ve read about it, and about Dr Hart in America? It will reduce my female hormones. Hopefully testosterone treatments. It’s all very new but… I need it. I need to be who I really am. And Doctor Hirschfeld is the expert.”

“I understand, thank you for explaining,” Hannibal soothed as he ran a hand through Will’s hair. “In that case, I’m sure Doctor Hirschfeld will just improve upon perfection.”

When Will smiled Hannibal pulled him into his arms, holding him against his chest. “Your mother is good to you?”

“Hmm,” Will hummed his agreement and nodded. “She understands that I am what I am. My father… He thought I was… wrong. That I was wrong in the eyes of God. But mother says that God is infallible and so everything he makes is how it is meant to be. If God had not intended me to be a boy then he wouldn’t have made me feel this way. He wouldn’t have made it so people like Doctor Hirschfeld could do what they do.”

“I believe she is correct,” Hannibal said, pressing a kiss to Will’s forehead. “Where is your father now?” He couldn’t help but feel an intense desire to destroy anyone and anything that might hurt Will.

“Gone. Mother sent him away and we’ve not seen him since. No one has. He just… disappeared.” Will spoke tentatively but with no pain or regret. A welcome loss.

“Hmm,” Hannibal hummed against his hair. “I’m glad.”

At that Will let out a deep sigh and started to pull away. “I should go.”

“You should,” Hannibal agreed, though he kept a hand on his arm. It was a loose hold but it stopped Will going any further.

“She can’t know that you know, mother I mean. No one is meant to know.” Will said quietly.

“Someone will eventually,” Hannibal reasoned. “Surely she wants you to wed, to make your own life?”

Will shook his head, “I can’t marry. I won’t be a woman to marry a man, and I don’t wish to marry a woman. And either way I’d have to allow them to know.”

Hannibal took in a breath and blinked. He pulled Will back to him, cupping his face.

“My darling boy, you let me know.”

“Humph,” Will smiled and then turned his head. “I know people find me attractive. I saw you watching me, you know, you’re aren’t subtle. But… I liked the way you watched me. I liked that I didn’t unsettle you when I talked with you. I felt like I’d met someone who could handle me. And so… just this once-”

“It doesn’t have to be this once,” Hannibal said before he could even consider the words.

Will chuckled and shook his head, “Of course it does.”

Hannibal shook his head. “I know now, and I think nothing of it. All I ask, beg, is that you allow me to remain in your life. As a benefactor, a friend, however you wish society to see us. But, I hope, behind closed doors, as your husband.”

Will let out a bark of laughter, “You can’t be serious.”

“I am,” Hannibal replied. And he was. He wanted nothing more in that moment to be connected to this beauty for the rest of his life. To watch his beauty blossom into something else as he aged. Hannibal could imagine Will akin to a bust he had seen of Hadrian’s lover Antinoüs, and he was hungry to see the man Will would grow into.

They both went quiet for a moment and Will just looked at him, studying him to try and see if this was actually real.

“Will, when you asked the concierge for my name did they give you my title as well?”

Will frowned and then replied slowly, “He mentioned you are a doctor, he did not say what kind.”

Hannibal smiled, “That is true, but I am also a Count. In Lithuania I have property, a great house. A title and wealth. The house is secluded and quiet, a perfect place for convalescence. I extend to you and your family the invitation to come and recover once you are done in Berlin. It is my fondest wish that you accept.”

Will let out a shaky breath and something of a sob.

*

Waking alone left Hannibal feeling bereft.

Will had left hours earlier with a promise to see him again in these coming days and to meanwhile think over the offers Hannibal had made.

In the light of day, he should perhaps have regretted such offers, but he didn’t. Hannibal found himself eager to see Will again and to know that he might see him every day for the rest of his life. This was no passing fancy as everyone else in his life had previously been.

So he felt a mixture of light and heavy as he went down to the dining room for breakfast. He longed to see Will again but was scared of what the boy’s answer might be.

“Table for one,” Hannibal said to the maître d' when he arrived at the dining room.

“Signore,” The man greeted, “Signora Graham has asked if you would join her party for breakfast this morning.”

Hannibal blinked and looked over the room, seeing the table set for four and already seating Will, his mother and the governess. Will’s face was bright and open, and his mother wore a faint but friendly smile and knowing smile.

Will had perhaps told her everything. And even if he had, she could surely have no objection to a man that would protect her son with his dying breath even if it meant killing for him. Something Hannibal suspected she might have already done herself.

A fine young man from a fine family. A willing patron. A secluded and quiet life where Will could live freely and Hannibal could love him entirely. The future, in that moment, seemed clear and laid out before him in a way he could never have expected the day he arrived at this hotel.

“I believe I shall accept the invitation,” Hannibal agreed with a smile of his own.

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